

# PEOPLE and THINGS: By ATTICUS

ONCE the Road Traffic Bill has threaded its way through the last Parliamentary traffic jam—the House of Lords spent three days debating it last week—the first parking meter can be operating within twenty-four hours.

When Meter Day comes—probably early in August—the result could be startling. Mr. John Brooke, the managing director of Venners Ltd., tells me that his firm will have 5,000 machines, at £30 a time, ready for immediate use and



he will be able to provide 1,000 more a week.

Mr. Brooke bubbles with rosy statistics. "In New York last year the income from meters was more than £1,500,000. There are now more than one million meters in the United States." More realistically, he admits that Cannock in Staffordshire is the only British township to have prepared a full parking meter scheme. The meters, which will swallow 25 before they have to be emptied, are fixed to four-foot iron stanchions. Mr. Brooke claims that they are theft-proof. Maybe. In America the hoodlums back up a truck, attach a length of chain, accelerate and tear the little money-boxes up by the roots.

## The Prime Ministers

I SHARE the regret expressed in many quarters last week that the Conference of Commonwealth Prime Ministers is held nowadays in such a hole-and-corner way, without any public fanfare or opportunities to see and applaud those eminent leaders. But we have to recall that the Commonwealth belongs to all its members and that what would please us here in Britain might not suit some of our visitors.

Mr. Nehru and Mr. Mohammed Ali, I feel, or Mr. Bandaranaike and Mr. Sriyodan, make easier companions in a Downing Street conference room than on the seat of an open landau or the platform of a public demonstration. Al Henley rules the cox most weigh

notable contributions to the Prime Ministers' meetings.

Mr. Nehru, in particular, has grown in stature as one of the Commonwealth's elder statesmen. Everyone seems to have felt him as one of the powers of the Conference. But his assured and sensible interventions were matched, by all accounts, by those of the new Pakistani Prime Minister, Mr. Jinnah appears to have been the most reticent of the visitors, but fears of his dogmatism proved quite unfounded.

As for Mr. Bandaranaike, who was cast for the role of *enfant terrible*, one of the key points of the pact on Ceylonese bases has been missed. The whole operation is accepted, not only by us but by him, as a smooth evolutionary development under the 1947 agreement, rather than the abrupt eviction that he might have liked to boast.

On the whole, I can forgo the public fanfares for the sake of the fruits of privacy.

## World Champion

AFTER the customary eclipse of our male players at Wimbledon it is some comfort that the world's championship for court tennis remains in British hands, and is likely to stay here just as long as the redoubtable wrists of James Dear retain their resilience.

At forty-seven, Dear is still a slim, trim figure—he has weighed ten stone four pounds for the last thirty years—and his schedule would cripple younger athletes. When I met him at Queen's Club last week he was about to begin six hours of lawn tennis coaching. "That sort of playing doesn't always give you much exercise," he said, "so I like to get twenty minutes or so in the squash court when I finish."

In September he goes to Wellington College as coach. He has strong views on the nursing of talent. "When Brough, or Head, or Rosewall find that one of their shots is letting them down, they'll go out and practise it for an hour at a time. Our young players just get out on a court and play each other. That isn't training, that's practice."

## The Dockers (small 'D')

UNDOUBTEDLY one of the most popular entries at Henley was the dockers' crew—the Poplar and Blackwall Eight—but they very nearly had to scratch because they arrived with too small a cox. Under the Al Henley rules the cox must weigh at least seven stone when

steering a light crew, seven and a half stone for middleweights, and eight stone for the heavies. The dockers' regular cox had had to stand down because of school examinations, but a car was immediately sent to Poplar, he was hauled from his desk, and the day was saved.

## Henley for Ever

M. Gaston Mulleg, President of the International Rowing Federation, who yesterday presented the prizes,

commented that in races abroad a cox need only weigh forty kilos (six stone).

But he is a firm champion of Henley's idiosyncrasies. When the Russians wanted some of the Regatta customs changed to suit them, and their request was refused, they approached M. Mulleg and asked him to overrule the Henley Committee.

M. Mulleg replied that the

Henley Stewards had run their Regatta perfectly for more than a hundred years and that his Federation had long ago decided never to interfere with it.

Accordingly Henley remains a law unto itself and nearly all its customs will continue to differ from those abroad.

## Snob Appeal

I HAVE commented before on the vulgarity of the British Travel Association's advertising

in the United States. How can the B.T.A. sink to the grovelling strumpetry of their latest "begging letter" to America entitled: "How To Find Your Great - Great - Great - Great - Grandfather in Britain?"

Go back to the village your ancestors came from. Talk to the oldest inhabitant. . . . Visit the Vicar . . . consult the Parish Register. . . . Maybe you and the Vicar will end the afternoon by calling on a number of your ancestors in the churchyard.

"If the Parish Register falls, don't give up. . . . The British adore old documents and never throw them out. . . .

"You can call on the scholarly curators of Britain's genealogical societies and great libraries (such as the British Museum).

"If you consult the telephone book, you may come up with a helpful great-aunt (or charming cousin). Consult the College of Heralds (sic) in London, or Lord Lyon in Edinburgh, and you may come up with a Coat of Arms!

"It will be a grand vacation project,\* and one discovery will be a sense of kinship with the British. They will all be eager to help. . . .

"If you don't have a British ancestor, why not invent one?"

## Blessed Alliance

I ASKED week I gave a lift to one of the 200 American midshipmen now paying a brief visit to this country. He was on his way to early Mass at Westminster Cathedral.

"Thank you very much," he said as I dropped him at the Cathedral door, and then, solemnly, "may God save your Queen."

## Pithy Dictum

MR. FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT, dean of modern architects, thinks that the grandstands at all race tracks should be redesigned. He says that even the newest grandstands are based on English designs "hundreds of years old," and are totally unfunctional.

He has made plans for the famous Belmont track outside New York, but he is sure that Belmont will not accept them.

"They have an expert," he says. "An expert is a man who has stopped thinking. Why should he think? He is an expert."

## "A Certain Smile"

IT will be interesting to watch the literary career of Francoise Saran. She was twenty-

one only a few days ago, and yet "Bonjour Tristesse," and now "Un Certain Sourire," are two of the biggest best-sellers since the war.

"Un Certain Sourire," now keeping busy the largest body of translators outside the United Nations, is, I think, a better book than the first and, though the smart critics say it is only concerned with "bed, boredom and whisky," venerated French



"Kiki" Quotes, alias Francoise Saran.

literary figures such as Robert Kemp, are comparing Mlle Saran to Colette, Benjamin Constant and even to Gohineau.

Although "Bonjour Tristesse" was a success in England and America, I cannot believe that Mlle Saran will continue to thrive in translation. Even her titles are difficult, and there is an elusive glide to her comments on life and love which I think can be appreciated only in the original.

Irene Ash has translated the book for John Murray. It will be published in August with the rather lame title of "A Certain Smile." The German translator, whom I met recently in despair, "Ein Gewisse Lächeln" is even lazier.

## Science Corner

"THE MOTOR" publishes the following list of every-day noises with the amount of noise they produce, measured in decibels:

Threshold of hearing	0 db
Whisper	10
Quiet conversation	20
Average conversation	50
Noisy home	60
Noisy office	75
Noisy factory	80
Bottlemakers' shop	100
Underground train	105
Threshold of pain	120
They have forgotten "Cook	
tail warts . . . 121."	